



*ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY*



# **COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## **Back To School Safety NEWS RELEASE - August 24, 2009**

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**FAX TO: LOCAL MEDIA**

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**8-24-09, 3:00PM Authority Lt. Todd Hopwood**

**PARENTS, MOTORISTS REMINDED OF "BACK-TO-SCHOOL" SAFETY TIPS-** With school scheduled to start for many local students including Albemarle County on Tuesday, August 25th, Albemarle County Police would like to remind area motorists and parents of some important safety tips to protect students.

Motorists are advised to slow down and watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops. When driving in school zones, obey the reduced speed limit and watch out for young people who may be preoccupied while walking or driving to school.

Drivers should also remember that children will be gathered at bus stops on the side of the road beginning Tuesday morning and should be alert to kids that may be crossing the road to reach a bus stop. Parents should insure that children have a safe area to wait for the bus that is off the roadway and visible to oncoming traffic.

One of the most common traffic problems has been drivers passing stopped school buses. There are nearly 170 county school buses traveling over 1700 miles every day carrying an estimated 12,000 students. Virginia Code 46.2-859 requires the driver of a motor vehicle approaching from any direction a clearly marked school bus which is stopped, with warning devices activated, on any highway, private road, or school driveway for the purpose of taking on or discharging children, to stop and remain stopped until all persons are clear of the highway, private road, or school driveway. This does not apply to divided highways (travel lanes which are separated by a physical barrier, such as a median). A bus with yellow flashing lights activated indicates that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles. A bus with red flashing lights activated and the extended stop arm out indicates that the bus has stopped and that children are loading or unloading. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: LT. TODD HOPWOOD AT 434-972-4037

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**stop flashing** and the extended stop arm is withdrawn before they can start driving again.

**Albemarle County Police will be providing a visible police presence in and around area schools in an effort to promote safe driving behaviors.**

**HOME ALONE SAFETY** - The start of school means time at home unsupervised for many area students. Here are some suggestions to help home alone kids feel safe and protected.

*Teach your "home alone" children:*

- to check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home
- how to call 9-1-1 or your area's emergency number
- how to give directions to your home in case of emergency
- how to use the door and window locks and the alarm system if you have one
- to never let anyone into your home without asking your permission
- to never let a caller at the door or on the phone know that they're alone
- to carry a house key with them in a safe place - don't leave it under a mat or hidden outside the house
- how to escape in case of fire
- to not go into an empty house or apartment if things don't look right - a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door.
- to let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable